/13 cont./

576 enter a house is decided with the same ceremoniousness. Or, for example, when two horsemen meet each other in the forest. If the younger of the two has something to say to the older one, he must dismount and speak while standing on the ground. At that point, the older one urges him to speak without dismounting.

/14/ The language of the Abkhaz also bears witness to their politeness. In conversation they often use such expressions as: "I ask that your sickness will pass on to me," "may I become the victim of your sicknesses," "may I be the victim instead of you," "may I go around the place where you are lying," etc. In keeping with this last expression, an Abkhaz woman, when visiting her sick foster-child or a person she has not seen for a long time, walks three times around him with the words, "utsge mtsuge seizgat," i.e. "may I carry away your sickness, your misfortune."

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For every occasion in life, the Abkhaz has a special greeting, in which are expressed his wishes for prosperity, strength, victory, fertility, profit, etc. In this repertoire of various Abkhaz greetings, there are even some which are especially meant for occasions when one meets persons who are going to a horse-race, greetings for the person who is arranging the races, and so forth. And this is quite understandable and natural for a people such as the Abkhaz, for whom horse and arms constitute the most beloved things, which they have been accustomed to value highly almost from the cradle. The children of members of the upper classes in the very first years of their lives become excellent riders and weapon-bearers. Pistol, dagger, saber, knife, and a whole arsenal of weapons are the constant adornment of every Abkhaz man. For him there is no greater pleasure than to ride armed from head to foot, a burka thrown over him, in the company of his comrades, singing a merry song. Without a horse and arms, life is not worth living to an Abkhaz!

181 [565] [411] [293]

Besides horse-races and trick-riding, the following games are worth noting in the life of the Abkhaz: 1. the ball-game, 2. arkil-riki, and 3. stone-throwing. The folk-music and folk-poetry of the Abkhaz are extremely meager.

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